



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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Brad Little / Governor
Jim Fredericks / Director

Hunting and Advanced Technology (HAT) Working Group MEETING MINUTES

December 2, 2024

Wendy Green Lowe, Facilitator with P2 Solutions, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. mountain time.

Ellary TuckerWilliams, Legislative and Community Engagement Coordinator, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Members attending virtually included: Derick Attebury, Matt Borg, Jason Carr, Jeff Choules, Ken Crane, Dillon Halverson, Tim Frost, Nathan Guy, Larry Hatter, Halli Hemmingway, Kimberly Johnson, Jeremiah Mani, Alex Martin, Chelsea Merriman, Bryce Oldemeyer, Kevin Rogers, Tal Sampson, Jeff Shinn, Nicole Swafford, Doug Talbot, Rob Thornberry, Jason Topp, and Dustin Webster.

IDFG staff in attendance included: Ellary TuckerWilliams and Elizabeth Page.

Guest speakers and presenters included: Kyle Lehr, Director of Big Game Records, Boone and Crockett Club; Justin Spring, Executive Director, Pope and Young Club; and Tony Wasley, President, Wildlife Management Institute.

In compliance with open meeting law, members of the public had the opportunity to attend virtually, through a Zoom meeting link.

Welcome and Orientation

Ellary TuckerWilliams

Wendy Lowe shared the objectives for the December 2nd, 2024, meeting, and reiterated the ground rules.

Objectives:

- Welcome all and share an update of comments submitted via the online feedback form
- Continue to provide the opportunity for everyone to begin to get to know each other
- Receive presentations about the fair chase ethic and provide the opportunity for Working Group members to ask questions about the information shared
- Discuss Working Group members' initial reflections on the information provided
- Identify next steps to continue moving forward.

Ground Rules:

- Participate with Intention
- Appreciate the Diversity of Perspectives
- Treat Others with Respect

Public Comments Submitted through Online Feedback Form

Ellary Tucker Williams

Members of the public had the opportunity to submit public comments, which were summarized and provided to the advisory members prior to the meeting. Since the last meeting, the group has received 121 comments from the public feedback form. A significant portion of these comments expressed general support for hunting technology and fewer restrictions on hunters. However, comments opposing advanced technologies often included specific caveats or objections to certain technologies, such as thermal/infrared night vision, drones, and live feed/location sharing.

The main topics addressed in the comments included long-range shooting and optics, trail cameras, motorized vehicles, thermal optics, and the use of drones. Furthermore, many comments were not germane to the working group's charter, including concerns about season setting, tag limits, non-resident hunting, and wolf management. Some comments also addressed concerns about the structure and membership of the working group itself. Despite these diverse perspectives, Ellary emphasized the high level of public participation in the process and the valuable insights provided by the public feedback.

Boone and Crockett Club

Kyle Lehr, Director of Big Game Records

Kyle Lehr, Director of Big Game Records for the Boone and Crockett Club, began his presentation by introducing the club, founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell. He emphasized the club's pioneering role in wildlife conservation in North America. Lehr then defined fair chase as the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit of game animals without giving the hunter an unfair advantage. He stressed that fair chase principles were established early on in the club's history and remain highly relevant today.

Lehr further emphasized that ethical hunting extends beyond simply following the rules and encompasses a higher standard of conduct in the field. He addressed the issue of long-range shooting, acknowledging advancements in technology while emphasizing the importance of stretching the stalk and ensuring responsible shot placement.

Finally, Lehr discussed the impact of technology on hunting, including the use of trail cameras, drones, and real-time data transmission. He emphasized that the use of such technology should not provide hunters with an unfair advantage over game animals. In essence, Lehr's presentation provided an overview of the Boone and Crockett Club's mission, the importance of fair chase principles in ethical hunting, and the ethical considerations surrounding the use of technology in modern hunting.

Pope and Young Club

Justin Spring, Executive Director

Justin Spring, Executive Director of Pope and Young, began by emphasizing the shared values of his organization with the Boone and Crockett Club, particularly their dedication to fair chase and ethical hunting practices. Spring provided Idaho specific archery harvest data from 1975-2023 that demonstrates a steady upward trend in hunter success rates. He attributes this increase, in part, to advancements in archery equipment. It is Pope and Youngs believe that this heightened success rate could potentially necessitate a reduction in the number of hunting tags issued, thereby limiting future hunting opportunities for archers.

To further illustrate this point, Spring presented data on archery hunting success rates in Wisconsin, demonstrating a significant surge following the legalization of crossbows. This example underscored how technological advancements can substantially impact harvest rates and ultimately, hunter opportunity. Spring further argued that these technological advancements can compromise wildlife's ability to detect hunters, potentially creating an unfair advantage. He emphasized the critical importance of maintaining accessible hunting opportunities for all and highlighted the potential negative impact of technology-driven success rate increases on individual hunters' chances.

Finally, Spring emphasized the importance of public perception in shaping hunting practices. He stressed that maintaining public support for hunting is paramount for the long-term sustainability of the sport. Therefore, any recommendations regarding the use of technology in hunting must carefully consider the views and concerns of the broader public. In essence, Spring's presentation underscored the potential ramifications of technological advancements on hunting ethics, hunter opportunity, and public perception of hunting. He emphasized the need for a thoughtful and comprehensive approach when evaluating and regulating the use of technology in hunting practices.

Wildlife Management Institute

Tony Wasley, President

Tony Wasley, President of the Wildlife Management Institute, began his presentation by stating that technology itself is inherently neutral; it's the application of technology that determines its impact. He underscored the paramount importance of upholding fair chase principles, ensuring that hunters do not possess an unfair advantage over wildlife. Wasley highlighted the profound impact of advancements in hunting technology, encompassing transportation, weaponry, optics, and communication. These advancements have facilitated increased accessibility to remote areas and enhanced hunter effectiveness. He introduced the concept of "shifting baselines," where technological advancements gradually redefine what is considered "normal" within the hunting community, potentially influencing ethical considerations. Wasley stressed that wildlife belongs to all citizens, not just hunters, therefore, maintaining social license for hunting is crucial. He also argued that self-regulation within the hunting community is essential. Hunters bear the responsibility of upholding ethical standards and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the hunting heritage.

In conclusion, Wasley stated that the objective of any technology should be to contribute to the ethical harvest of wildlife, thereby fostering greater public support for the hunting heritage and safeguarding fair chase principles.

This presentation provided a framework for the group's discussions by highlighting the need for a careful assessment of the ethical implications of technological advancements in hunting, emphasizing the importance of maintaining fair chase principles, and underscoring the necessity of ensuring that hunting practices remain socially acceptable.

Questions and Answers

Wendy Lowe/All

To Justin:

- **Public Perception & Technology:**
 - **The core concern:** Does the increasing use of technology in hunting (like remote-controlled shooting) alienate the public, even those who generally support hunting? The speaker specifically mentions the negative public reaction to a company that attempted to offer remote deer hunting. This highlights a potential conflict between technological advancements in hunting and public acceptance.
 - **Understanding public sentiment:** The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the perception of hunting among the 78% of the public who support it but don't actively hunt. This suggests a need to carefully consider how technological advancements might impact these individuals' views on hunting and its ethics.
- **Archery Seasons & Technology:**
 - **Impact of advanced archery equipment:** The question explores whether the increased accuracy and effectiveness of modern archery equipment are impacting the sustainability of traditional archery seasons.
 - **Potential for conflict:** The speaker acknowledges that while advanced archery gear benefits hunters, it may lead to higher harvest rates, particularly of larger animals, potentially disrupting the balance of wildlife populations and potentially leading to calls for shorter or more restrictive archery seasons.

To Kyle:

- **Definitions of Fair Chase and Emerging Technology:**
 - **Seeking clarification:** The speaker requests a reiteration of the specific definitions of "Fair Chase" and the statement on emerging technology within the context of hunting. This suggests a need for clear and concise guidelines to ensure ethical and responsible hunting practices in the face of evolving technology.
- **Long-Range Shooting & the Boone and Crockett Club:**
 - **Ethical considerations:** The speaker inquires about the Boone and Crockett Club's statement that long-range shooting "takes unfair advantage of the game animal." The core concern is whether long-range shooting diminishes the animal's natural ability to detect and avoid danger, thus altering the inherent challenge and ethical balance of the hunt.
 - **Hunter perspectives:** The speaker seeks information on any existing studies or polls that gauge hunter opinions on long-range shooting and its ethical

implications. This information would provide valuable insights into the perspectives of hunters themselves on this evolving aspect of the sport.

To Tony:

- **Ethical Hunting & Technological Advantage:**
 - **Defining ethical success:** The question probes the relationship between technological advantage (such as high-powered rifles and extensive practice) and ethical hunting.
 - **Balancing skill and technology:** The speaker questions whether a hunter with superior equipment and training achieves a more "ethical" kill compared to a hunter with less advanced equipment, even if the latter results in a less precise shot or a wounded animal. This delves into the complex interplay between skill, technology, and ethical considerations in modern hunting.
- **Rule Enforcement & Practicality:**
 - **The challenge of enforcement:** The speaker raises the concern that overly complex or difficult-to-enforce hunting regulations can burden both wildlife agencies and hunters.
 - **Finding a balance:** The discussion highlights the need to strike a balance between establishing ethical guidelines and creating regulations that are both practical and enforceable by wildlife authorities.

General Considerations:

- **Public Perception:** Throughout the discussion, there's a strong emphasis on understanding and maintaining public support for hunting. This underscores the importance of responsible hunting practices and the need to address public concerns regarding the ethical and environmental impacts of hunting in the face of evolving technology.
- **Technological Advancements:** The text explores the multifaceted impact of technological advancements on hunting practices, including both potential benefits and potential challenges to ethical hunting, wildlife management, and public perception.

Small Group Discussions – Round One: How did you develop your hunting ethics and how have they evolved over time?

All/Wendy

The working group engaged in small group discussions about how they develop their personal hunting ethics. Participants were divided into small groups and asked to record their thoughts. The responses were then categorized and shared with the entire group.

The discussion among members revealed that their hunting ethics were primarily shaped by family, friends, and mentors, with personal experiences playing a crucial role in their evolution. Most hunters described an increasing emphasis on fair chase, selective harvests, and minimizing animal suffering over time. While technology can offer benefits, concerns were raised about its potential to increase harvest rates and diminish the challenge. Hunters stressed the importance of self-reflection, honesty, and holding themselves accountable to their ethical standards. There was a strong desire to find effective ways to communicate and promote ethical hunting practices to the broader public, acknowledging the need for open dialogue and a willingness to engage with diverse perspectives.

Small Group Discussions – Round Two: What ethics do you feel should be passed along to future generations of Idaho hunters?

All/Wendy

The working group engaged in small group discussions about what ethics they felt should be passed along to future generations of Idaho hunters. Participants were divided into small groups and asked to record their thoughts. The responses were then categorized and shared with the entire group.

The members agreed that passing on a strong ethical foundation is crucial for the future of hunting. This includes fostering a deep respect for the animal, promoting responsible hunting practices, and ensuring that the pursuit of hunting remains ethical and sustainable for generations to come. Key themes included respect for the animal, fair chase, responsibility, and the need for improved education on ethical hunting practices. Concerns were raised about the potential negative influence of social media on hunting ethics and the importance of defining and promoting a clear "Idaho Fair Chase" ethic.

Meeting Close: Evaluation and Next Steps

Wendy Lowe shared the dates, locations, and focus of future working group meetings.

The group discussed the upcoming distribution of a survey by Idaho Fish and Game to 15,000 hunters to gather their opinions on hunting technology, fair chase practices, and related issues. The results of this survey will be presented at the next meeting and are expected to guide the group's discussions and recommendations. The discussion also highlighted the significant impact of improved transportation technology, such as 4-wheelers, ATVs, and e-bikes, on hunting access and wildlife. The group noted expressed concerns among young hunters regarding of the potential of future restrictions on trail cameras. The next meeting will feature presentations on various topics, including the results of the hunter survey, harvest success rates and the factors that influence them, and enforcement challenges and capabilities. Following these presentations, the group will begin to discuss and formulate their recommendations on hunting ethics and technology. This text outlines the upcoming steps in the group's process, including data gathering, expert presentations, and the initiation of discussions to develop recommendations on hunting ethics and technology.

Meeting	Location	Focus
November 11, 2024	Online	Hunting Technologies
December 2, 2024	Online	Fair Chase Ethic
January 4, 2025	In-Person	Hunting Technology and Fair Chase Survey Results
January 27, 2025	Online	Possible Working Group Suggestions

February 17, 2025	Online	Continued Work on Suggestions
March 10, 2025	Online	Moving Towards Finalization of Working Group's Suggestions
March 22	In-Person	If needed, to Complete the Working Groups Recommendations

In-person meetings will be from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. MT, and take place at the IDFG Headquarters Building, located at 600 S. Walnut Street in Boise, Idaho. Virtual meetings will be held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. MT, at the following zoom link:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85605146179>.

Adjourn 9:00 p.m.